

Community Policing and Refugee Settlement  
in Regional Australia:  
A Case Study of Tasmania

Danielle Monique Campbell

Bachelor of Arts, University of Tasmania

Masters of Arts (Development), Murdoch University

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Tasmanian Institute of Law Enforcement Studies,  
School of Government,  
University of Tasmania  
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## DECLARATION 1

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The co-authored published papers acknowledge the contributions made by the second author in her role as PhD supervisor only and a statement of authorship is included in the declarations in this thesis.

The Tasmanian Social Science Human Research Ethic Committee granted this research full application approval (reference number H8597) on the 22 March 2006 and an additional acceptance of amendments on the 11 May 2007.

Signed

Date – 17 November 2011

## DECLARATION 2

### Statement of Co-authorship

The appendix to this thesis includes two co-authored publications. Danielle Campbell is cited as the first author in both publications. This reflects the fact that the research and the primary authorship of both papers is hers. The inclusion of Roberta Julian as the second author is an acknowledgment of her intellectual input in the role of primary supervisor for the PhD.

Signed

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Roberta Julian', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Associate Professor Roberta Julian

17 November 2011

## **ABSTRACT**

Although Australian police were not the perpetrators of the profound violation of trust that characterises the refugee experience, they have the potential to be one of the key agencies in settlement to assist in the restoration of trust. This research explores the perspectives of police and refugees concerning police-refugee and refugee-police relations. The research was conducted in Tasmania, Australia, as a regional location settling refugees. The qualitative research involved 160 participants including police and members of seven of the African newly arrived refugee communities. The data was collected from 2006 to 2008, a time that was characterised by periods of negative media attention focusing on African refugees and debate about settlement in regional Australia.

The research offers an understanding of both the perspectives of police and the members of newly arrived African communities in regional Australia on factors that can influence interactions between them. The research reveals that an understanding of experiential difference and community dynamics is crucial. The data analysis identified three distinct themes affecting police-refugee relations: the process of transition for refugees, the timing of police interventions and individual/community dynamics, highlighting a need for police awareness of the refugee experience and how this awareness may then influence contact between police and refugees. The study also tackles the issues of reporting and racism from both the perspectives of police and the African refugee communities.

The research explores ways to expand community involvement in a range of safety and crime prevention initiatives by increasing the flow of information between refugee communities and police, and improving feelings of safety and security for individual refugees, refugee communities and police. The study identifies principles to create, maintain and sustain positive police-refugee relationships that support the complex dynamics of settlement in regional Australia, with a focus on the vulnerability of refugees during stages of transition. It was found that using a number of targeted community policing strategies to support newly arrived refugee communities during initial settlement contributed to an increase in refugees' understandings of Australian law and that trust, perceived legitimacy in police, and cooperation were increased. The thesis also argues that police-refugee relationships are enhanced by a procedural justice framework and could be positively affected by restorative justice practices. Finally, the findings from this research can be translated into a series of practical applications that could have a positive impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of police work by increasing the capacity for community engagement, improving feelings of safety and encouraging reporting to police.

5

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION 1 .....	ii
DECLARATION 2 .....	iii
ABSTRACT .....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	vi
DECLARATION 1 .....	2
DECLARATION 2 .....	3
ABSTRACT .....	4
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	6
LIST OF FIGURES .....	16
LIST OF TABLES .....	17
PUBLICATIONS .....	19
ABBREVIATIONS .....	20
DEFINING KEY TERMS .....	21
CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION .....	25
WHY THIS RESEARCH? .....	25
WHO BECAME INVOLVED IN THIS RESEARCH? .....	28
TERMINOLOGY .....	28
RESEARCH QUESTIONS .....	29
Aim .....	29
Initial Research Questions .....	30
WHY TASMANIA? .....	30
WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH? .....	31
THESIS OVERVIEW .....	34
CHAPTER 2 – REFUGEE SETTLEMENT IN TASMANIA .....	41
REFUGEE SETTLEMENT IN AUSTRALIA .....	42
Humanitarian Program Figures 2003-2009 .....	43

Major Source Countries to Tasmania .....	49
TASMANIA .....	54
REFUGEE SETTLEMENT IN TASMANIA.....	56
Refugee Settlement Services.....	59
ACCULTURATION .....	63
WHAT IS THE STORY OF REFUGEE ASPIRATIONS .....	65
THE REFUGEE JOURNEY.....	66
Phases of the Refugee Journey .....	68
Phases of Refugee Adjustment .....	72
Individual/ Community.....	76
THE STORY OF SETTLEMENT IN AUSTRALIA .....	77
Young Refugees and Settlement .....	85
Gender and Refugee Settlement.....	87
SETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES IN REGIONAL AUSTRALIA .....	89
Regional versus Metropolitan .....	89
Regional Settlement: Strengths and Challenges .....	91
COMMUNITY ACCEPTANCE.....	93
MEDIA.....	96
CONCLUSION .....	98
<b>CHAPTER 3 – COMMUNITY POLICING AND TRUST .....</b>	<b>100</b>
COMMUNITY POLICING PRINCIPLES .....	100
ORGANISATION OF POLICING IN AUSTRALIA .....	102
HISTORY OF COMMUNITY POLICING .....	104
COMMUNITY POLICING FRAMEWORK.....	108
PUBLIC ATTITUDES TO POLICE .....	110
COMMUNITY POLICING, DIVERSITY AND VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES .....	115
REFUGEES AND POLICE .....	119
THE IMPORTANCE OF TRUST.....	125



MISTRUST FOR SURVIVAL.....	128
SOCIAL INCLUSION AND POLICE-REFUGEE RELATIONS.....	131
CONCLUSION .....	135
<b>CHAPTER 4 – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>138</b>
TERMINOLOGY .....	141
RESEARCH CONSIDERATIONS.....	141
RESEARCH APPROACH.....	144
Ethics .....	144
Methodology.....	147
Relationship Building.....	149
Sample Selection and Recruitment .....	150
Negotiating Access .....	153
SAMPLE .....	155
PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC DATA .....	158
Age and Gender.....	159
Languages Spoken .....	161
Settlement Time in Australia.....	161
Countries and Length of Time in Asylum .....	162
PROCEDURE.....	164
INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS .....	166
Refugees.....	166
Police Personnel .....	170
Key Service Providers and CSR volunteers .....	172
FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS.....	173
PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION .....	177
TRANSCRIPTION .....	182
DATA ANALYSIS .....	183
CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE METHODOLOGY APPROACHES .....	184

Challenges .....	184
Strengths .....	187
CONCLUSION .....	190
<b>CHAPTER 5 – THE REFUGEE VOICE.....</b>	<b>192</b>
THEMES IN POLICE–REFUGEE RELATIONS .....	193
Theme 1: Background and Transition .....	196
Past Experiences of Police.....	196
Uniform .....	197
Bribery .....	198
Flight and Violence .....	199
Losing Family Members.....	200
Diverse Coping Strategies.....	203
Theme 2: Initial Settlement.....	204
Dislocated Relationships .....	204
Need for Healing .....	206
Australian Law .....	207
Reporting.....	212
Social Inclusion .....	214
Media .....	216
Police Contact and Interaction During Incidents .....	218
Driving and Licensing.....	220
Youth .....	225
Substance Use and Abuse .....	227
Mental Illness .....	229
Gender and Intergenerational Stress.....	231
Family Violence .....	244
Theme 3: Knowledge Acquisition and Education.....	245
Confusion, Hesitancy and Extremity .....	246

People Wanted to Know why the Law Exists .....	248
Theme 4: Reactions to Present Experiences .....	249
Assumptions about Refugees, Coping and Communication .....	250
Community Mythology.....	253
Assisted Process of Knowledge Transfer.....	254
Feelings of Less Access to Justice or Limited Follow Through .....	255
Reflections on Other Approaches .....	259
General Observations from the Refugee Perspective.....	261
Individual and Organisational Racism .....	265
CONCLUSION .....	267
<b>CHAPTER 6 – THE VOICE OF POLICE AND VOICES IN POLICE-REFUGEE INTERACTION</b> .....	<b>270</b>
Police Contact and Incident Interaction.....	272
SECTION1: BARRIERS AND ENABLERS TO COMMUNITY POLICING.....	273
Theme 1: Strategies at Organisational Foundation .....	274
Theme 2: Language Barriers.....	279
Theme 3: Access to Resources .....	280
Theme 4: Initiating a Positive Agenda.....	287
Theme 5: Training.....	289
Theme 6: Reporting.....	290
Theme 7: Racism .....	291
Theme 8: Successful Strategies .....	292
Voice of Police: A Summary .....	294
SECTION 2: ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING TRUST AND POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS: THE FIRST STEPS.....	295
The ‘Conversation with Police’ Forum .....	297
How was the forum organised? .....	300
Setting the scene .....	303

General observations about the forum sessions .....	305
Adult session .....	307
Youth forum .....	315
Researcher Reflections on the Forum.....	317
Outcomes from the Forum.....	320
General reflective comments made by panel members.....	320
Conclusion on forum .....	322
<b>SECTION 3: VOICES AND PERSPECTIVES IN INTERACTION .....</b>	<b>323</b>
Theme1: Communication.....	324
General Communication .....	324
Body language .....	324
Specific police terms .....	325
Theme 2: Learning and Knowledge.....	325
Practical application learning.....	325
Process of understanding law .....	326
Police hesitancy in learning strategies .....	326
Theme 3: Experiences of Interaction .....	327
Difference in Gender and Public/Private .....	327
Female police officers' actions especially towards young people .....	328
Assumptions about who is guilty .....	328
Generational difference .....	329
Theme 4: Experiences of Racism.....	330
Racism and harassment techniques.....	330
Reporting, Racism and the Media.....	330
Researcher's Reflections on Participant Observations .....	331
<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>332</b>

<b>CHAPTER 7 – DISCUSSION OF COMMUNITY POLICING AND REFUGEE SETTLEMENT</b>	<b>334</b>
SOCIAL INCLUSION AND POLICE-REFUGEE RELATIONS.....	336
THE REFUGEE JOURNEY AND POLICING.....	337
Phases of Refugee Adjustment .....	340
Arrival Phase.....	341
Reality Phase .....	343
Negotiation Phase .....	347
Alienation Phase.....	351
Marginalisation Phase .....	353
Integration Phase .....	353
Phase Adjustment from Alienation Phase to Negotiation Phase.....	354
Phase Adjustment from Alienation Phase to Marginalisation Phase.....	356
Phase adjustment from Marginalisation Phase to Integration Phase .....	356
Variations in the phases and adjustments .....	358
Relationship between Refugee Settlement Phases and Ideals of Community Policing....	359
Community Education.....	360
Support for intervention in positive police-refugee relations .....	361
Trust .....	362
Attitude formation/change .....	364
Transition .....	366
Timing.....	370
Individual/ Community.....	372
PROCEDURAL JUSTICE .....	374
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE .....	377
Legitimacy for Police and Refugees.....	379
CONCLUSION .....	380

<b>CHAPTER 8 – PRACTICAL APPLICATION IN COMMUNITY POLICING .....</b>	<b>384</b>
DESIRED OUTCOMES .....	384
OVERARCHING STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE POLICE-REFUGEE RELATIONSHIP .....	388
PRINCIPLES .....	390
STRATEGIES FOR POLICE AND REFUGEE COMMUNITIES AND NON-POLICE ORGANISATIONS TO ENHANCE POSITIVE POLICE AND REFUGEE RELATIONS .....	392
MEDIA.....	394
CONCLUSION .....	395
<b>CHAPTER 9 – CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>398</b>
IMPACT OF THE RESEARCH .....	402
WIDER CONTRIBUTIONS.....	404
CONTRIBUTIONS TO RESEARCH .....	405
FURTHER RESEARCH.....	406
CONCLUSION .....	407
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</b>	<b>409</b>
Appendix 1 .....	435
Appendix 2 .....	452
Appendix 3 .....	456
Appendix 4 .....	457
Appendix 5 .....	459
Appendix 6 .....	460
Appendix 7 .....	462
Appendix 8 .....	463
Appendix 9 .....	465
Appendix 10 .....	467
Appendix 11 .....	470
Appendix 12 .....	472
Appendix 13 .....	474

Appendix 14 .....	475
Appendix 15 .....	477
Appendix 16 .....	478
Appendix 17 .....	480
Appendix 18 .....	481
Appendix 19 .....	482
Appendix 20 .....	484
Appendix 21 .....	486
Appendix 22 .....	488